

SOLIDARITY NOTES

"I hope we shall crush... in its birth the aristocracy of our moneyed corporations, which dare already to challenge our government to a trial of strength and bid defiance to the laws of our country."

--Thomas Jefferson in a letter to George Logan, 1816

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE OF THE CAPITAL DISTRICT & NEW YORK SOLIDARITY

Solidarity Committee of the Capital District & New York Solidarity ■ 33 Central Avenue ■ Albany, New York 12210 ■ (518) 673-2602

SOLIDARITY MEETINGS: The Solidarity Committee meets at 3:30 PM the second Thursday of each month at the Social Justice Center, 33 Central Avenue in Albany. Volunteers to prepare the Notes for mailing will meet at 3:00 PM. Those wishing to attend via ZOOM contact Doug Bullock at: dbull4@verizon.net to receive the link.

**JULY/AUGUST
2024**

Michael L. Burns Labor Day Celebration

Sponsored by Capital District Area Labor Federation,
Labor Day Parade Committee & Solidarity Committee

September 2, 2024
12:00 to 4:00 PM
275 Grooms Rd., Clifton Park

All Union Members & Families Invited

- Hot Dogs,
- Hamburgers,
- Sausage & Peppers,
- Clams, Drinks & More
- Rock Wall,
- Video Truck
- Horseshoes, Volleyball,
- & Other Games

UNION STRONG!

On this day, we honor and appreciate the hard work, dedication, and contributions of workers everywhere.

For more info contact Mark Emanatian at
memanatian@cdaalf.org

Citizens Urged To Demand That State Agencies Enforce The Green Amendment

--By TOM ELLIS

Residents across New York are trying to force the state agencies and courts to enforce the "Green Amendment" to the NYS Constitution overwhelmingly approved by voters in 2021. The amendment reads: "Each person shall have the right to clean air and water, and to a healthful environment."

Unfortunately, NY Attorney General Letita James has asserted in court filings the Green Amendment does not empower courts to require state agencies to take action against large polluters. Many people disagree.

Large trash incinerators and landfills operate throughout New York, sometimes in residential neighborhoods, near schools, and on and near river banks. The state also allows and promotes the spreading of contaminated sewage sludge on agricultural lands.

By refusing to champion the amendment, Ms. James protects the owners of trash incinerators and landfills, and shields the governor and state health and environmental conservation departments, who refuse to close dumps and landfills or develop safe alternatives to them.

Many wonder what is the purpose of the Green Amendment if it cannot be used to protect public health and the environment. Is it slick greenwashing that protects powerful corporate interests?

The attorney general enforces other constitutional rights. Why not the Green Amendment? ❖

Screening Of "Bread And Roses" On July 27 In Albany

The Solidarity Committee of the Capital District and Capital District DSA are co-sponsoring a free showing of the pro-labor film, "Bread and Roses." Directed by the great British filmmaker, Ken Loach, and starring Adrien Brody, Pilar Padilla, and Elpidia Carrillo.

This movie, which appeared in 2000, tells the stirring story of a union-organizing campaign in Los Angeles among oppressed immigrant service workers. The film will be screened on Saturday, July 27, at 6:30 PM, at the Unitarian Universalist Society of Albany, 405 Washington Avenue (across the street from the downtown SUNY campus). Everyone is welcome to attend. Don't miss it!

All Unions Called To Strike Together On May Day 2028 By UAW

May Day 2028 Could Transform the Labor Movement—and the World. The UAW President is calling on unions everywhere to align their contract expiration dates for mass impact.

SHAWN FAIN, UAW President, APRIL 30, 2024: Members of the United Auto Workers courageously fought corporate greed at Ford, General Motors and Stellantis last fall during the historic six-week Stand-Up Strike

Stand-up Strike: Because of their determination and commitment, we won record contracts with the Big Three automakers. After decades of falling behind, UAW autoworkers are finally moving forward again. We made a lot of ambitious demands at the bargaining table. One in particular may not have gotten the same attention as the reinstatement of cost-of-living adjustments or the reopening of the Stellantis assembly plant in Belvidere, Ill.—but it could also prove transformational: We aligned our contracts to expire at midnight on April 30, 2028.

We are fully preparing to strike on May Day 2028.

Which is critically important for several reasons.

The first is that, to reshape the economy into one that works for the benefit of everyone—not just the wealthy—we need to reclaim our country's history of militant trade unions that united workers across race, gender and nationality.

May Day has its roots right here in the United States—in 1886, in the streets of Chicago, where workers were organizing and fighting for the 8-hour workday. This demand was met with brutal resistance by employers, who used both vicious mercenaries and the police to violently suppress mass protests led by unions. A bomb exploded in Chicago's Haymarket Square during a clash between workers and police on May 4, 1886, killing several police officers and others.

The result was a sham trial, and seven labor leaders were sentenced to death. The cause of those Haymarket Martyrs became the cause of the working class around the world, and May 1 became an international holiday commemorating the fight of workers everywhere to reclaim their time and the value of their labor. Now, about 138 years later, May Day is celebrated as an official holiday in countries from Argentina to South Africa to Sweden to Hong Kong, just about everywhere—except its country of origin.

That's not a coincidence. The billionaire class and their political lackeys have done everything they can to white out the true history of the working class in our country. They want us to believe that corporate bosses gave workers decent wages, benefits and safer working conditions out of the goodness of their hearts. That justice and equality for people of color, for immigrants, for women and for queer communities were gifts benevolently handed down from above.

But we know the truth. Every law passed, every union formed and contract won—every improvement made at the workplace—has been won through the tireless sacrifice of the working class. But if we are to truly reclaim the power and importance of May Day, then it can't be through empty symbolism. It must be through action.

We wanted to ensure our contracts expired at midnight on April 30, 2028, not as a symbolic gesture, but as a rallying cry. We've asked other unions to join us in setting their contract expiration dates to May Day 2028 in hopes the labor movement can collectively aspire to building the power needed to change the world.

We form unions in our workplaces because we know we have far more power together than we do as individuals. What is true for workers in one workplace is true for workers across all workplaces. When unions organize together across industries and countries, our power is exponentially amplified. The fact is: without workers, the world stops running.

--See *May Day 2028* on Page 2

A Look At Solidarity's History — Compiled by Fred Pfeiffer

Look Back 2002

Joann Braman, Shop Steward of OPEIU Local #153 representing Group Health Insurance (GHI) workers, reported that their four week long strike had resulted in a fair contract with most givebacks taken off the table and four year contract with raises of 4,4,4.5 and 4.5. percent. The settlement reached in the middle of the night saved 1400 union members from health insurance cost sharing and co-pays. (GHI is now part of Emblem Health.) Solidarity was there with them on their picket line on Wolf Rd., Colonie.

40 Childcare workers at the LaSalle School in Albany voted 30 to 3, to be represented by AFSCME District Council #1707. Letters were being sent to the Executive Director of LaSalle, Bill Wolff, to accept the union victory and negotiate a fair contract. Representatives Glenn Bouldin and Larry Turner were organizers for the campaign.

A rally of over 150 union members was held at the NYS Department of Labor on the Harriman Campus protesting union busting by the management of the NY Department of Labor. Two management representatives busted into the PEF union office to prevent union officers from representing a CSEA member. The union charged the local vice president had been knocked to the floor by the representatives and taken to

the hospital. Barbara Moloney President of CSEA Local 670 presided over the rally and decried management tactics including limiting representation, unilaterally imposing a dress code and basically turning the telephone claims centre into a computer age sweatshop.

Cutco Cutlery of Olean, NY received the annual Labor Management Award from the AFL-CIO Union Label and Service Trades Department. 600 members of the United Steelworkers of America Local 5429 worked there. (On checking the Internet, Cutco still produces its cutlery there committed to being American Made. As of 2023 the USWA was promoting union made cutlery from Cutco.)

The Notes stated that proponents of drilling in the Arctic Refuge claim the this would create 700,000 jobs were seriously flawed. Citing a study by the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers Union—which represents workers in the Alaska Oil Fields who came out in support of protecting the Wildlife Refuge from drilling. In a letter to President Clinton OCAW said the oil industry claims that Arctic Refuge development would produce hundreds of thousands of jobs across the US are highly dubious. (OCAW is now the Paper, Allied Industrial, Chemical and Energy Workers Union (PACE). ❖

Amazon Workers' Union Votes Overwhelmingly To Join Teamsters

The Amazon Labor Union voted "overwhelmingly" to affiliate with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, according to the Associated Press in mid-June.

The news service said that the ALU voted for merger with the Teamsters, as they attempted to negotiate a contract with Amazon, a notoriously anti-union corporation. The vote was 98.3 percent in favor of the affiliation.

"Together, with hard work, courage, and conviction, the Teamsters and ALU will fight fearlessly to ensure Amazon workers secure the good jobs and safe working conditions they deserve in a union contract," Teamsters General President Sean M. O'Brien said in a statement, AP reported.

AP reported: ALU President Chris Smalls said he was proud of members for "choosing a path to victory." "We're now stronger than ever before," Smalls said.

John Logan, a labor history professor at San Francisco State University, was quoted by AP, and said teaming up with an established union was like a "lifeline" for the independent ALU because the group is "going nowhere at the moment." ❖

New Labor Dept. Rule Will Help Workers Earn \$1.5 Billion More In Overtime

Slated to take effect July 1, the change to the federally mandated overtime policy will affect 4.3 million U.S. workers.

--By TYLER WALICEK

June 10, 2024—The Labor Department has unveiled a change to federally mandated overtime policy that promises to enact sweeping pay reform for salaried workers across domestic industries. With this newly announced increase, as of July 1, employers will be obligated to pay overtime to workers on salary who make under \$43,888. Eventually, in a second phase in 2025, the minimum will increase so that the overtime mandate applies to workers making as much as \$1,128 per week, or \$58,656 per year.

Because the July 1 increase is a marked leap up from the 2020 cap of \$35,568 - kept egregiously low by the Labor Department under former President Donald Trump—it encompasses a significant subset of the United States workforce; by one estimate from the Economic Policy Institute (EPI), 4.3 million salaried employees are now poised to receive pay for exceeding normal work times—long hours during which they previously would have labored, effectively, for free.

Long Overdue

U.S. employers have long utilized a simple sleight of hand in order to extract further surplus value from their workforces. "White-collar" exemptions have meant that certain employees, placed on salary instead of wages, can be worked a lot harder for a lot less.

Waged workers have, since the 1938 Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), been entitled to overtime pay of at least time and a half, or 150 percent of their usual wage, for putting in working time exceeding 40 hours a week.

(Whether they actually receive it is often another matter entirely. Unpaid overtime makes up part of the mountainous sum of large-scale theft committed by employer against employee in the U.S., to the tune of \$50 billion per year. This

--See *Labor Dept. Rule* on Page 3

May Day 2028... (Cont'd. from Page 1)

If working people are truly going to win on a massive scale—truly win healthcare as a human right, win pensions so everyone can retire with dignity, win an improved standard of living and more time off the clock so we can spend more of our time with our family and friends—then unions have to start thinking bigger.

I'll give you an example. Last summer, during the lead-up to the contract expiration at the Big Three, I had the opportunity to meet with Teamsters General President Sean O'Brien at their headquarters in Washington, D.C. During our conversation, he pledged that no trucks driven by Teamsters would deliver parts to struck Big Three facilities.

The power of UAW autoworkers withholding our labor during the Stand-Up Strike was massive. But with the Teamsters supporting our fight, refusing to deliver parts to Big Three facilities, we had even more power. It created another headache for the Detroit automakers. It created more pressure on the Big Three to settle.

Now, imagine that type of worker solidarity on a much bigger scale.

And because corporate greed doesn't recognize borders, neither should our solidarity. In the UAW, we've seen first-hand how companies pit workers against one another. Workers in Michigan are pitted against workers in Alabama, workers in the United States are pitted against workers in Mexico, workers in North America are pitted against workers in South America.

It's a simple game. Companies shift production—or threaten to shift production—to locations where the labor is cheaper, the environmental regulations more lax, and the tax cuts and subsidies are greater.

A united working class is the only effective wall against the billionaire class' race to the bottom. For the U.S. labor movement, that means grappling with some hard truths. Like the undeniable fact that it is impossible to protect American jobs while ignoring the plight of everyone else.

There's been talk about a "general strike" for as long as I've been alive. But that's all it has been: talk. If we are serious about building enough collective power to win universal healthcare and the right to retire with dignity, then we need to spend the next four years getting prepared.

A general strike isn't going to happen on a whim. It's not going to happen over social media.

A successful general strike is going to take time, mass coordination, and a whole lot of work by the labor movement.

As working people, we must come together. We can no longer allow corporations, politicians and borders to divide us.

It's time we reclaimed May Day for the working class. That's what our May Day contract expiration is all about. ❖

A GIGGLE:

Mrs. Ryan said to Mrs. Flynn, "We had an argument with the electric company." Mrs. Flynn asked, "Who won?" Mrs. Ryan said, "It was a tie. We don't get any electricity and they don't get any money."

SOLIDARITY NOTES

John Funicello, *Editor*

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Thanks to the Mailing Committee for the May/June 2024 Issue

Fees Eliminated For GSEU In Historic Victory

--By BRAD HERSHENSON,
GSEU representative

June 19, 2024—The Graduate Student Employees Union (GSEU) achieved a historic victory this year with the elimination of broad-based worker fees for its members. The victory represents a major shift in the campus workplace as previously members were required to pay back almost 15% of their already low salaries back to the University.

The efforts yielded a \$6 million state investment in public workers to date (with another \$6 million to be awarded over the next two years) which included rallies on campus and at the Capitol, meetings with dozens of legislators; and could not have been accomplished without the support of local labor leaders, the Solidarity Committee of Albany, and

Assemblymember Pat Fahy.

As summer temperatures continue to rise contract negotiations are heating up for SUNY's graduate workforce. One item on the bargaining table is misclassification—where the employer assigns an hourly employee the responsibilities of a union member without the appropriate benefits. Further discussions may include grievance and arbitration, discrimination, and other items imperative to members.

GSEU members teach 40 percent of the classes at (State University of New York) SUNY statewide, conduct coursework and grading, and are proud members of CWA Local 1104. To hear about upcoming campus/legislative actions or to request GSEU support please email inquiries to: albanyl104@gmail.com. ❖

Starbucks Resumes Bargaining With Starbucks Workers United

Starbucks resumed bargaining with its workers' union, amid a fresh wave of organized stores, according to The Guardian newspaper on May 30.

According to the Guardian, "After a long, embittered campaign, the Seattle-based coffee giant jointly announced a new framework with Workers United in February to reach contracts with unionized stores. Bargaining got under way on Wednesday, and is due to continue on Thursday.

Since baristas in Buffalo successfully formed the first unionized US Starbucks store in December 2021, an organizing drive by Starbucks Workers United has spread nationwide, to more than 425 Starbucks stores in 43 states, representing over 10,500 workers. ❖

Mercedes Workers Vote Against Union In Alabama

In a mid-May vote near Tuscaloosa, Alabama, workers at a Mercedes auto plant voted against joining a union.

The vote was taken over several days after a vicious campaign by state and local politicians, company executives, and union-busting advocates(?), who threatened the workers by saying a pro-union vote would change the status of Alabama as a "business-friendly" state in a "business-friendly" region. The subtle and not-so-subtle threat was that companies such as Mercedes would not locate in Alabama...

Mercedes workers voted 56 percent to 44 percent against joining the union, according to the National Labor Relations Board, which oversaw the election. Close to 4,700 ballots were cast, representing a large majority of the 5,075 employees who were eligible to vote. ❖

Disneyland Workers Vote To Unionize With Actors Equity

In an overwhelming vote of approval, Disney character actors voted to unionize in May, with Actors Equity Association, the union that represents some 51,000 professional actors and stage managers in the U.S.

According to press reports, among the key issues that brought workers together to join the union were securing improvements in safety and scheduling and demanding "a living wage," as well as other workplace benefits, the union said. ❖

SOLIDARITY MAY MEETING

The Solidarity Committee met May 9, 2024 at the Social Justice Center in Albany with Art Fleischner, Dorothy Tristman, Doug Bullock, Fred Pfeiffer, Jim Kaufman, Larry Wittner, Martin Manley, Susan DuBois, and Tom Ellis participating. One resolution was considered and enacted. Jim and Fred motioned and seconded to approve the Treasurer's report, with one correction. ❖

THANKS!

The Solidarity Committee thanks all who paid dues or contributed to the treasury. However big or small the contribution, it helps in our work, which members can see news of in our newsletter, Solidarity Notes.

It's never too late to pay dues or contribute, so feel free to send a check any time. It's always appreciated. Checks can be made payable to: **Solidarity Committee, Social Justice Center, 33 Central Ave., Albany, N.Y. 12210.**

We have set annual dues at \$20 for individuals and \$150 for unions and other organizations, but any amount is greatly appreciated. See you on the picket line or at the rally!

Who Would Have Thought: Tipping A "Racist Relic"

According to the Economic Policy Institute (EPI), tipping is a racist relic and a modern tool of economic oppression in the South, rooted in racism and economic exploitation.

EPI, in its "Spotlight" in June, details the racist history of tipping, federal and state policy governing tipped work, and the experience of tipped workers in the economy—both nationwide and in the South.

Across the country, tipped workers are more likely to be people of color, women, women of color, or single parents, and are disproportionately born outside of the United States. Tipped workers earn low wages, experience high rates of poverty, and are vulnerable to exploitation in the workplace—particularly in the form of wage theft and sexual harassment. The South has the largest tipped workforce of any region.

Tipped workers in the South are paid the second lowest median wage of any region, and most Southern states allow employers to pay tipped workers as little as \$2.13 an hour. Hispanic workers in the South are overrepresented in tipped work, as are women—who account for 70 percent of the tipped workforce despite making up less than half of all workers in the region. ❖ (To read the entire report, visit: www.epi.org)

The Economic Policy Institute (EPI) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan think tank working for the last 30 years to counter rising inequality, low wages and weak benefits for working people, slower economic growth, unacceptable employment conditions, and a widening racial wage gap.

Dark Money From Right-Wing Groups Swells To More Than A Billion

Two anonymous \$425 million donations give dark money conservative group a massive haul;

DonorsTrust took in more than \$1 billion in 2021, according to its tax filing. It came from three donations. The identities of those donors remains a secret, according to Politico news.

Leonard Leo now controls more than \$1.6 billion in conservative donor funds, and he is erecting a new architecture of dark-money groups to administer it, according to the news site

DonorsTrust used those funds to support a vast network of prominent conservative causes, Polico reported, including a \$17.1 million gift it made to The 85 Fund, a group founded by a major engine of the conservative movement: Leonard Leo. All told, DonorsTrust spent about \$192 million last year and entered 2022 with roughly \$1.5 billion in assets.

The reader should not wonder too much about how oceans of money have corrupted the electoral system in a presumptive democracy or democratic republic. ❖

Labor Dept. Rule... (Cont'd. from Page 2)

form of normalized mass exploitation, in dollar value, far outweighs an entire year's worth of better known types of larceny; in fact, wage theft exceeds the toll of robbery, burglary and motor vehicle theft combined.)

Some of the nation's most critical existing labor protections originate in the FLSA. In addition to mandatory overtime (gradually expanded, over the decades, to include many more employment categories), the FLSA established the minimum wage, dictated rules about payroll recordkeeping and tipped work and, notably, disbarred child labor. Of course, like so many other fundamental pieces of labor and civil rights legislation, the overtime protections of the FLSA have become a target of sabotage for corporate interests and their right-wing collaborators. ❖

(Read more of this and other reports at www.truthout.org)

Union Drive At Labcorp Is The Latest In A String Of Health Care Organizing Wins

Organizers say corporate efforts to quash a union actually galvanized workers to overwhelmingly vote for one.

--By Tyler Walicek

TRUTHOUT, May 19, 2024

Laboratory technicians and assistants at Oregon locations of the multibillion-dollar multinational testing chain Laboratory Corporation of America Holdings (better known as Labcorp) took part in a groundbreaking union election this month. The results came in with a resounding win for labor, as all seven locations involved in the election voted to unionize.

The percentage of workers that voted to unionize in the May 1-3 election was, if not totally unprecedented, at least remarkably high at 86 percent; for a union election, such a rate is practically unanimous.

Several factors underlie the widespread assent found among Labcorp employees—their resounding certainty regarding the necessity of a union speaks to both the effectiveness of organizers and the camaraderie and solidarity among staff, as well as the difficult conditions in which they labor.

Ham-fisted interventions by management in hopes of stymying the union proved counterproductive, and laboratory workers would later describe feelings of jubilation as the affirmative results poured in. With numerous medical organizing campaigns ongoing in the Pacific Northwest, and with stirrings of similar efforts elsewhere, unionists see cause for optimism around this new turf as the tide of health care unionization among doctors, nurses and other high paid professionals begins to reach less-unionized laboratory workers at private companies.

Subsidizing U.S. Health Care

To understand why this victory among Oregon Labcorp workers was so sweeping, it's important to consider how their working conditions reached their present state—which means considering the structural role of companies like Labcorp and their place amid a number of shifts underway in U.S. medical labor.

The domestic health care field has infamously seen the profit motive become the guiding principle of operations. Part and parcel of the neoliberal era of deregulation and rapacious profiteering, the nonprofit roots of the health care sector have been

left behind as a new class of profit-focused administrators and private equity vultures have set about inflating higher-ups' salaries, "upcoding" to wildly escalate patient costs and instrumentalizing hospital property and assets as capital for investment.

Their destructive operations have been intertwined with the influences of insurance profiteering, medical device corporations, and innumerable other factors that have made U.S. health care both the most expensive and the worst among capitalist countries in the Global North. As facilities have transformed from nonprofit public goods into profiteering entities more akin to investment funds, patients have suffered immensely from poor outcomes and tumbling life expectancy—and have gone bankrupt in exchange.

AND, FROM:

--By Emily Janakiram,

TRUTHOUT, October 24, 2023

Of course, health care employees have also paid the cost of enriching investors. In response to the intensifying workloads, staffing shortages, shrinking pay rates, schedule demands and general precarity accompanying the rise of the "travel nursing" model, waves of nurses have joined together to collectively bargain. Nursing, especially in recent decades (and with the pandemic serving as an inflection point), has been a critical front for organizing medical labor, with remarkable success.

Labcorp is a noteworthy example of the kind of corporations that have risen up around the privatization that has come to dominate health care. Hospital laboratories—which draw blood and take samples to conduct routine biometric tests of all kinds, from toxicology to disease screening to genome analysis, with all the safety precautions and responsibility to accuracy that such work entails—were traditionally part of the wall-to-wall workforces at individual hospitals, operating under the nonprofit banner.

However, with hospital administrations increasingly feeling themselves obligated to cut costs wherever possible on everything from equipment to skilled labor to serve the purposes of investment returns, a new market has been pried open. Now, a hospital lab's responsibilities can be outsourced to one of a few properly equipped private com-

panies. Swelling in size thanks to a series of mergers and acquisitions (another signature of the neoliberal era in medicine), Labcorp went public on the NASDAQ, and eventually, along with competitors like Quest Diagnostics, bloated into one of the world's preeminent laboratory networks. It is now a ubiquitous contractor for all manner of U.S. health care services, from major hospitals to private practices.

Labcorp operates on a high-volume model, processing millions of tests weekly, and relying heavily on automating procedures while keeping the minimum possible skeleton crew of low-paid staff to slash labor costs. While the staffing shortage seen among highly trained workers like nurses did not have as extreme an impact on laboratory technicians and assistants, the inpatient (in-hospital) and outpatient staff at Labcorp facilities have still been affected. They face extreme workloads, forcing them to work at a pace that can induce safety concerns.

After all, not only is COVID an omnipresent threat for any health care worker interacting with infected patients, but Labcorp techs also deal with all manner of biohazards and disease vectors, to say nothing of the risk to blood-draw patients posed by overworked and stressed staff. (COVID, while significantly intensifying the risk to its low-paid employees, was also, unsurprisingly, a tremendous boon to the corporation's profits.)

For all the challenges they face, and despite their professional training, Labcorp employees from phlebotomists to sample couriers are poorly remunerated. Technician salaries in Oregon can be startlingly low; according to the crowdsourced salary site Indeed (and corroborated by other sources), phlebotomist pay has been reported at as little as \$18.20 per hour. Specimen accessioners, clinical assistants, histology technicians, sample processors, and those in other jobs are widely reported to make \$17 to \$23 an hour, or only around \$40,000 a year, which, especially for the Portland area, is hardly a living wage.

Phlebotomists are making about the same pay as Labcorp customer service call center representatives. Labcorp CEO Adam Schechter, for his part, is paid in salary and benefits to the tune of \$16 million a year. ❖

A Message From The AFL-CIO On Immigration, In 2024:

Since our nation's founding, immigrants and refugees have enriched the fabric of our communities, our workforce and our labor movement. Like it was for generations of immigrants before, the labor movement is the natural home for new immigrants struggling to achieve economic security and win social justice, and our commitment to building an immigration system that represents the needs and interests of all working people is fierce and unwavering.

The only way to stop the race to the bottom in wages and standards is for working people of all races, religions and immigration status to stand together and demand an end to policies that put profits over people. The entire workforce suffers when millions struggle to support their families without a way to speak up on the job, and ramping up fear in our workplaces only serves to increase exploitation. Instead of deporting immigrants, we need to ensure that all working people have rights on the job and are able to exercise them without fear of retaliation.

Enacting meaningful immigration reform is critical to our long-term efforts to lift labor standards and empower workers, and the labor movement will continue to stand in solidarity with all working people. ❖

BOSSES GET RICHER: AP

The Associated Press in early June reported that "the typical compensation package for chief executives who run companies in the S&P 500 jumped nearly 13 percent last year, easily surpassing the gains for workers at a time when inflation was putting considerable pressure on Americans' budgets."

According to the news service: The median pay package for CEOs rose to \$16.3 million, up 12.6 percent, according to data analyzed for The Associated Press by Equilar. Meanwhile, wages and benefits netted by private-sector workers rose 4.1 percent through 2023. At half the companies in this year's pay survey, it would take the worker at the middle of the company's pay scale almost 200 years to make what their CEO did.

And, AP reported: CEOs got rewarded as the economy showed remarkable resilience, underpinning strong profits and boosting stock prices. After navigating the pandemic, companies faced challenges from persistent inflation and higher interest rates. About two dozen CEOs in the AP's annual survey received a pay bump of 50 percent or more. ❖

Solidarity Committee website is: www.solidaritycommittee.org

How We Failed The Promise Of Making Genocide A Crime

--By NOAH LANARD

From *Mother Jones* magazine June 3, 2024:

Israel declared its independence in 1948. That same year, the United Nations adopted the convention that defined genocide as a crime. The tension between these two "never agains" was there from the start.

The word "genocide" was coined in 1941 by Raphael Lemkin, a Jewish lawyer from a Polish family, who combined the Greek word for a people (genos) and the Latin translation for killing (cide). At its most basic, genocide meant systematically destroying another group. Lemkin laid it out as a two-phase, often colonial process in his 1944 book, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*: First, the oppressor erases the "national pattern" of the victim. Then, it imposes its own. Genocide stretched from antiquity (Carthage) to modern times (Ireland).

"The term does not necessarily signify mass killings although it may mean that," Lemkin explained in a 1945 article. "More often it refers to a coordinated plan aimed at destruction of the essential foundations"—cultural institutions,

physical structures, the economy—"of the life of national groups." The "machine gun" was merely a "last resort."

Lemkin was a lawyer, not a sociologist. By birthing the term "genocide," he was not trying to taxonomize the horrors of war. Instead, Lemkin—who lost 49 family members in the Holocaust—hoped that he could identify a crime to stop it. Nazi terror could not simply be Germany's "internal problem." With genocide, Lemkin hoped to give legal and moral weight to international intervention. He hoped to bring into being an offense that could be policed and, in turn, stopped in a new and supposedly civilized world.

Today, as Israel stands accused by South Africa of genocide before the International Court of Justice for the methods used in its war on Gaza, it is worth recalling Lemkin's arguments. The question of Israel's actions has been a narrow one: Has the killing met the criteria for genocide under current international law? But Lemkin's broader conception of the term—though it has been chipped away at by courts and has faded from public memory—has been less discussed. ❖

Jews And Supporters Rally At AIPAC Leadership Confab

National Harbor, MD, March 12, 2024—A group of 50-plus American Jews and allies affiliated with IfNotNow protested AIPAC's Conference today in the Washington, DC area to call out AIPAC's lobbying for Israel's slaughtering of Palestinians in Gaza alongside its support for pro-insurrection, anti-abortion politicians.

The protesters demanded political and communal leaders "Reject AIPAC" and work towards a lasting ceasefire, hostage exchange, and a pathway to equality, justice, and a thriving future for all Palestinians and Israelis. The protest occurred the day after a group of 20+ progressive organizations including IfNotNow, Justice Democrats, and Working Families Party launched the "Reject AIPAC" Coalition. Learn more about the coalition at rejectaipac.org.

"Growing up in the Jewish community, I was taught the importance of caring for everyone, especially the most marginalized members of our society. I reject AIPAC because I see them as giving cover to political factions that are a threat to all marginalized members of our society, including Jews," said IfNotNow DC Member Josh Burg.

"AIPAC's support of insurrectionist and anti-abortion Members of Congress in exchange for unconditional support for Israel all while spending millions of dollars in right-wing dark money to crush any dissent poses a grave threat to American democracy and the critical effort to build a society that cares for all of us."

"I want my Jewish community to reject AIPAC because we can no longer afford to buy into the lie we have been told that the oppression and subjugation of Palestinians is necessary for Jewish safety. AIPAC actively enables that lie by allying with white nationalists, insurrectionists, and far-right evangelicals," said Lily Greenberg Call, IfNotNow DC Member. "A multiracial democracy is the only real option for Jewish safety, here in America and in Israel/Palestine. AIPAC not only undermines the possibility of that in America, harming American Jewish communities, but actively supports and enables Israeli leadership that has proven to not care about keeping Israelis or Palestinians safe."

IfNotNow national spokesperson Eva Borgwardt said, "AIPAC is a far-right lobby in the same mold as the NRA.

From their support for unconditional weapons funding for the Israeli government, to their endorsements of Members of Congress who supported the January 6 insurrection, to their lobbying against a ceasefire even at the expense of the hostages, they have made clear that their open hostility toward Palestinian lives comes at the expense of Jewish safety. It's time for U.S. politicians and the American Jewish community to Reject AIPAC, once and for all."

AIPAC's agenda is unpopular among American Jews and the broader public. While AIPAC continues to lobby against a ceasefire, 50 percent of American Jews and a majority of all Americans support a lasting ceasefire and hostage exchange in Gaza. In 2022, AIPAC endorsed 109 candidates who voted to decertify and overturn the 2020 presidential election. AIPAC also endorsed 200+ candidates in 2022 who supported overturning *Roe v. Wade*, while 88 percent of American Jews support the right to abortion.

A report last week from the Washington Post revealed that the United States has quietly approved and delivered more than 100 separate foreign military sales to Israel since the Gaza war began Oct. 7, amounting to thousands of precision-guided munitions, small-diameter bombs, bunker busters, small arms and other lethal aid. Meanwhile, AIPAC and their allied PACs like Democratic Majority for Israel are spending over \$100 million to defeat the leaders who have been willing to call for a ceasefire and condemn Israel's massacre of Palestinians in Gaza.

We demand our leaders to reject AIPAC and instead acknowledge that the violence carried out by the Israeli government toward Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, funded by the U.S., does not make anyone safe. Rejecting AIPAC's direct support of the Israeli government's violence is an important step in working toward a lasting equality, justice, and safety for all Palestinians and Israelis. ❖

If NotNow is a movement of American Jews organizing our community to end U.S. support for Israel's apartheid system and demand equality, justice, and a thriving future for all Palestinians and Israelis. Contact: press@ifnotnowmovement.org

50,000 Gaza Children Require Urgent Treatment For Malnutrition: UN

--By Al Jazeera Staff

June 15, 2024—The UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) says more than 50,000 children in the Gaza Strip require immediate medical treatment for acute malnutrition.

In a statement on Saturday, the agency noted "with continued restrictions to humanitarian access, people in Gaza continue to face desperate levels of hunger. UNRWA teams work tirelessly to reach families with aid, but the situation is catastrophic."

UNICEF spokesperson James Elder also described how difficult it is to not only get aid into Gaza, but also to get workers have been killed in this war than any war since the advent of the UN," he told Al Jazeera.

On Wednesday, UNICEF had a mission to drive a truck full of nutritional and medical supplies for 10,000 children, Elder said. Their task was to deliver the aid, which was pre-approved by Israeli authorities, from Deir el-Balah to Gaza City, a 40km (25 miles) round trip.

"It took 13 hours and we spent eight of those around checkpoints, arguing around paperwork—'was it a truck or a van,'" he said. ❖

"Staggering" \$6.6 Million In Gifts To Supreme Court Justices

"The Supreme Court's gifts shouldn't be a secret. Congress must pass a binding code of ethics now," said one advocate.

June 7, 2024—U.S. Supreme Court justices have received millions of dollars in gifts over the past two decades—with far-right Justice Clarence Thomas being the main beneficiary of this largesse, according to a detailed analysis published Thursday.

The advocacy group Fix the Court published a database listing 546 total gifts valued at over \$4.7 million given to 18 current and former justices mostly between 2004 and 2023, as identified by the U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC). The database also lists "likely" gifts received by the justices and their estimated values, bringing the grand total to 672 gifts valued at nearly \$6.6 million.

The database was published a day before the justices are expected to release their financial disclosure reports. "Supreme Court justices should not be accepting gifts, let alone the hundreds of freebies worth millions of dollars they've received over the years," Fix the Court executive director Gabe Roth said in a statement Thursday. ❖ (By BRETT WILKINS)

Why Jack London Became A Socialist

--By FRED PFEIFFER

Why Jack London Became a Socialist and Writer. From Irving Stone's 1938 book "Jack London, Sailor on Horseback" describing Jack London 'the rampant individualist' without 'a socialist thought' until after experiencing life as a foster pirate, sailor, factory worker and rider of the rails until age twenty when he realized that his health and good fortune would run out as many of his peers and fellow workers had and would. Stone wrote of Jack's epiphany:

"They were men who had been injured and maimed at unguarded machines, and abandoned by their bosses; men who had sickened because of fourteen hours a day of toil in airless factories, and been let out as useless; men who had grown old in the harness and been replaced by younger and stronger ones. They were men whose industries had been killed off by changing times, and who had been unable to find or adjust to new ones, who had been supplanted by machines, who had been replaced by women and children at lower wages, who had been thrown out of work by depression and had never been reemployed."

"Jack saw that in five, ten, twenty years he too would be replaced by a younger and stronger man, would perforce become part of the city or slums of The Road. He learned two things, first he would have to educate himself so that he could work with his brain instead of his easily replaceable brawn; and second, that there was something wrong with an economic system that took from a man his best years of his working life, then cast him on the junk heap to starve and rot, a tragedy for the individual and his family, brutalizing and wasteful for society." ❖

(Page 60, 1969 paperback, New American Library inc.)

LABCORP Workers Organize A Union

LABCORP workers reached a tentative agreement and their union, United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) viewed it as a historic win.

The following is from Truthout news. May 23, 2024:

...Laboratory technicians and assistants at Oregon locations of the multibillion-dollar multinational testing chain Laboratory Corporation of America Holdings (better known as Labcorp) took part in a groundbreaking union election this month. The results came in with a resounding win for labor, as all seven locations involved in the election voted to unionize.

The percentage of workers that voted to unionize in the May 1-3 election was, if not totally unprecedented, at least remarkably high at 86 percent; for a union election, such a rate is practically unanimous. Several factors underlie the widespread assent found among Labcorp employees—their resounding certainty regarding the necessity of a union speaks to both the effectiveness of organizers and the camaraderie and solidarity among staff, as well as the difficult conditions in which they labor.

Ham-fisted interventions by management in hopes of stymying the union proved counterproductive, and laboratory workers would later describe feelings of jubilation as the affirmative results poured in.

With numerous medical organizing campaigns ongoing in the Pacific Northwest, and with stirrings of similar efforts elsewhere, unionists see cause for optimism around this new turf as the tide of health care unionization among doctors, nurses and other high paid professionals begins to reach less-unionized laboratory workers at private companies. ❖

In Memoriam: FW Alan Curry

--By GREG GEORGIO

I first came into contact with Fellow Worker Alan Curry in the late 1990s, not long after the early broadcasts of "The Labor Show" on WRPI-FM, which I hosted and produced. He phoned in to comment about a news story I had covered and did so several times in a short span of time after that. Soon, I began to encounter him at local labor events, often associated with the Capital District Solidarity Committee.

It was logical for Alan to have gravitated to these rallies and protests, for he had been active in a similar group in Ohio before relocating to the Capital District of Upstate New York. It was back in Ohio where Alan also worked with peace and labor activist, attorney Staughton Lynd and Fellow Worker Ed Mann.

Alan worked in Youngstown, Ohio steel in his younger days and sustained a significant head injury which put him on disability. But his life's work would be as a writer. He loved short story fiction and wrote it well. He would call and talk about writing and then began to share some pieces with me.

Eventually, The Upstate N.Y. IWW Branch published his short story, "Apple Box", as a recruitment pamphlet which tells a fictional version of the infamous IWW Free Speech Fights. He thought it was an honor and really enjoyed our use of it as union material. Another story which warns of the dangers of fascism will be published at a future date. He had some luck publishing other works of fiction with some literary journals, too.

It was an honor to get to know FW Curry, who eventually settled on the IWW as his refuge of world view. I recall a number of occasions where, in the days prior to his joining the IWW, he would often appear at local events where groups could set up lit' tables, his little card table with a small, hand

lettered placard proclaiming, "Out Front with D.S.A. !" He had been active with the Democratic Socialists of America from his earlier activist digs in Youngstown.

And I also had the honor of visiting Alan in a couple of the residences he maintained in Albany. His library of labor, socialist, radical history and anarchist writings was extensive. When he transitioned to assisted living, a big downsizing move, he gave away a great deal of his library, some of which now resides in the local Branch repository at the Social Justice Center in downtown Albany.

A shy and mostly solitary figure, Alan also enjoyed the idea he could pay his IWW dues to a living, breathing Delegate. I was lucky to have signed him up and collected his dues that way for over a decade.

He was also a paralegal and had hoped to start to drum up some work in that area but didn't have much success with it. Declining health did slow him down in his later years, so he was not seen at public events often due to mobility issues.

Alan had no family in the area and it is not known who may have survived him back in Ohio. We never learned much personal history but are proud to have known this stalwart defender of labor rights, the working class and an IWW member in good standing for 12 years before his passing in the fall of 2023

I will never forget his gravelly, deliberate speech leaving messages on my answering machine. They typically were like this: "Hello. This is me. I thought I'd check with you about paying some dues again because I think I'm behind again. Let me know. Goodbye."

Rest in peace, rest in power! Fellow Worker Alan Curry, presente!
--FW Greg Giorgio

Who Are The Semites (In A Time When We Often Hear "Anti-Semitism?")

This definition is from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia:

"This article is about the racial and ethnic term popular in the 19th and early 20th centuries. For the history of ancient groups who spoke Semitic languages, see ancient Semitic-speaking peoples.

The first depiction of historical ethnology of the world separated into the biblical sons of Noah: Semites, Hamites and Japhetites. Gatterer's Einleitung in die Synchronistische Universalhistorie (1771) explains his view that modern history has shown the truth of the biblical prediction of Japhetite supremacy (Genesis 9:25-27).[1] Click the image for a transcription of the text.

"Semitic people or Semites is an obsolete term for an ethnic, cultural or racial group associated with people of the Middle East, including Arabs, Jews, Akkadians, and Phoenicians. The terminology is now largely unused outside the grouping "Semitic languages" in linguistics. First used in

the 1770s by members of the Göttingen school of history, this biblical terminology for race was derived from Shem (*Hebrew*: שֵׁם), one of the three sons of Noah in the Book of Genesis,[9] together with the parallel terms Hamites and Japhetites. In archaeology, the term is sometimes used informally as "a kind of shorthand" for ancient Semitic-speaking peoples." ❖

What We All Work Toward: From The AFL-CIO

"...When working people unite to negotiate for fair treatment and a living wage, the benefits enable a better life for entire families across generations. The modern labor movement is open to everyone and strives to leave no worker behind. By standing together in unions and organizing for a brighter future for our families, working people in every type of job and every corner of our nation are strengthening America's democracy and renewing promise for generations to come..." ❖

"We Can Get There": Medicare For All Advocates See Resurgence In National Movement

"More and more people are waking up to realize, we do not want private insurance companies to be in control of our healthcare system," said one advocate who attended the latest Sanders Institute Gathering.

--By JULIA CONLEY

June 5, 2024 (CD)—At The Sanders Institute Gathering in Burlington, Vermont last weekend, U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders repeated the grim facts and statistics about one of the issues he's most passionate about—healthcare—that were no doubt familiar to many of the progressive advocates at the conference.

Americans spend twice as much per capita as what people in other wealthy countries pay for healthcare, with "significantly lower" life expectancy to show for it. Medical debt pushes more than half a million people in the U.S. into bankruptcy each year. More than a third of healthcare expenses go not to actual medical care, but to administrative costs.

But despite the well-known state of the U.S. healthcare system and a current political climate in which the fight for

Medicare for All has been relatively "quiet," as one advocate said, Dr. Deborah Richter believes the Gathering showed a resurgence in the movement for a government-funded healthcare system is on its way.

Growing bipartisan anger over a lack of transparency about healthcare prices, private insurers' denial of claims, and the huge profits raked in by insurance companies while an estimated 98 million American adults skip or delay medical appointments to avoid an unaffordable bill are all pushing people to demand change, according to Richter, who gave a presentation about efforts to bring government-funded healthcare to Vermont.

"Walter Cronkite once said that the U.S. healthcare system is neither healthy nor caring, nor a system," said Richter in the talk, which like the rest of the three-day conference was livestreamed. "And decades later, it's still true. But I think that's the bad news. The good news is that it is possible to cover every single Vermonter, every single American with comprehensive coverage without spending a penny more than we're spending currently." ❖

Part Two: Labor Notes Conference In April

--By TOM ELLIS

I attended two great workshops on health care at the April 19-21 Labor Notes conference in Chicago.

One was titled Increase worker power through Medicare For All. Katie Murray of the Massachusetts Nurses Association was superb: dynamic, knowledgeable, articulate. She said the four cornerstones of healthcare justice are access, affordability, quality, and equity. Employer sponsored coverage, she said, leads to wage stagnation and US businesses being less competitive internationally. Mental health care in the US, she said, is often of poor quality due to unscrupulous players. Incremental improvements to the system will never bring healthcare justice. Medicare For All (MFA), she said, would raise wages, make job transitions smoother, and facilitate strikes because employers would not be able to cut striking workers' health care benefits.

John Thompson said too many contract battles focus on health benefits and the US is the only nation that links health care to employment. He urged unions to remove health care from the bargaining table and said contract negotiations are the best time to engage members on MFA. "We are losing over the long run," he said, "with health care part of the contract negotiations."

Rose Roach of the Labor Campaign for Single Payer Health Care said 600 physicians in Minnesota recently organized with SEIU, private insurance company health care premiums are unsustainable, and it is insane to have different plans for medical, dental, and long term care. She said one trend is employers who are willing to insure only the worker and refuse to insure the worker's family. Employers, she said, are incentivizing workers to opt out of health care plans. Health care does not fit into the supply and demand construct, she said, and must be removed from it. Health care is "an economic weapon of the employer used to divide and conquer" and must be replaced.

We must, she said, raise the issue's political status in our unions and fund it. She said nurses don't care about your Green Card, your credit card, but do care about your Get Well Card. Medicare For All, she said, is about streamlining payments, not socialized medicine. "This is an existential fight," she said, and "labor is uniquely poised to lead on the issue." Medicare For all "is the ultimate act of solidarity."

Workshop attendees identified many obstacles to MFA enactment: unions sell health care plans and attract members with health care, business unionism, union leaders sit on health care boards, fear of activating members, anti-immigrant racism, brainwashing, confusion about how to pay for it, physicians believing they will not be able to charge as much, and a lack of antitrust law enforcement in the US.

Rose Roach said, "We do not want Blue Cross Blue Shield in our doctor's office." She urged the deprivatization of all public health programs including Medicaid. One-half of US retirees, she said, are on Medicaid Advantage, some like it, but Medicare Advantage is robbing us.

The workshop concluded with a discussion of: What do we do? Suggestions included educating your members, recognizing that you are not given health care benefits but you pay for them, and lobbying politicians. ❖

Electric Vehicle Workers In Ohio Hail Historic Contract Victory

--By BRETT WILKINS

(CD)June 17, 2024—United Auto Workers members at an Ohio plant that produces battery cells for General Motors electric vehicles on Monday celebrated their overwhelming ratification of a contract that the union said "sets a new standard for the EV industry with strong wages and benefits and historic health and safety protections."

UAW Local 1112 members at Ultium Cells' Lordstown, Ohio facility approved their new local contract by 98% on Sunday. Under the contract, production workers will be paid \$35 an hour by October 2027. Sunday's vote came after the workers at the plant—a joint venture between GM and South Korea-based LG Energy Solution—voted in December to unionize. "This is setting a precedent that can be built on," said Ultium worker Chris Wyatt. "This is a guideline that every other EV plant can follow through with."

When Ultium opened in 2021, the workers were nonunion, they made just \$16.50 an hour, and the EV industry was in a race to the bottom. But the Ultium workers organized with the UAW in late 2022 and during the Stand Up Strike, they were brought under the GM national agreement.

In addition to \$35 an hour, the new contract includes an immediate \$3,000 bonus, four full-time on-site union health and safety representatives, and a full-time union industrial hygienist at the Lordstown plant. ❖

(Read more at www.commondreams.org)

An Historic Win For Hospital Workers

1969 VERSION: 55 YEARS AGO, on June 27, 1969, a bitter and sometimes violent 14-week hospital-workers strike in Charleston, South Carolina, came to a victorious conclusion.

The strike had been triggered when management fired 12 leaders of the newly organized hospital workers union because the union had demanded that management meet with them. In addition to their leaders' reinstatement, the 400 strikers demanded that management recognize the union and agree to establish a formal grievance procedure.

The strikers were almost all African-American women employed as laundry workers, kitchen helpers, nurse's aides, licensed practical nurses, maids and orderlies. The strike pitted the workers—who had the support of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the NAACP and CORE, as well as the AFL-CIO—against Charleston's racist power structure.

In an effort to break the strike and prevent picketing, the governor of South Carolina declared a state of emergency, ordered more than a thousand state troopers and bayonet-wielding National Guardsmen to Charleston, and imposed a 9 pm to 5 am curfew. Hundreds of strikers and their supporters were arrested on the picket line. In reaction to the governor's heavy-handed response, the strike attracted massive support within South Carolina and throughout the South, as was demonstrated by two mass marches, one of which, on May 11, had 10,000 participants.

The union declared victory when management agreed to a modest pay increase, to rehire the fired union leaders and to establish a grievance procedure that mandated the union's participation. The events leading up to the strike's success is are movingly reported in Madeline Anderson's 30-minute documentary, "I Am Somebody," which can be seen here: <https://youtu.be/jRoHQXnu-dc?si=BJeVbL9Z95jrJAp-> ❖

(From Portside, July 2024)

Donald Trump's Empty Promises On Jobs

--By LARRY WITTNER

In mid-2015, announcing his candidacy for president of the United States, Donald Trump declared that he would "be the greatest jobs president that God ever created."

Subsequently, the Republican billionaire hammered away at this theme. The nation's loss of factory jobs, he argued, was the fault of Democrats, but, as he told a Detroit audience, he would "restore manufacturing in the United States." Addressing another campaign rally in Michigan, he asserted: "If I'm elected . . . you won't lose one plant, I promise you that."

With Trump's election, however, just the opposite occurred. During the four years of Trump's presidency, the United States lost 2.7 million jobs. As a result, he was the only president since 1939, when the U.S. government began compiling such employment statistics, to preside over a net loss of jobs.

Indeed, when it came to job creation, Trump was vastly outperformed by the other presidents. Bill Clinton oversaw the biggest gain, 23 million additional jobs, followed by Ronald Reagan (16 million), and Joe Biden (14 million)—all the way down to George W. Bush (1.4 million). During the presidency of Barack Obama, Trump's much-reviled predecessor, the United States added 11.6 million jobs.

Trump's defenders point to the disruptive effect the Covid-19 pandemic had on the American economy. Although the disease crisis certainly undermined employment during his presidency, it's also true that his denial and mismanagement of the public health emergency deepened its human and economic impact in the United States. Furthermore, even before the pandemic hit, job creation during the Trump presidency was relatively weak. During Trump's first 31 months in office, employment growth in the United States averaged 176,000 jobs per month. During Biden's first 31 months in office, employment growth averaged 433,000 jobs per month.

Trump, of course, knew how to create jobs, and, during his 2016 presidential campaign, even touted a specific plan for doing that—a \$1 trillion federal program to rebuild America's infrastructure. "We are going to fix our inner cities and rebuild our highways, bridges, tunnels, airports, schools, hospitals," he declared in a speech on the night of his election. "And we will put millions of our people to work as we rebuild it."

But Trump had very different priorities and, during his presidency, his infrastructure program never materialized. As a result, federal investments on roads and bridges as a share of the economy remained stagnant, Trump's promises to upgrade ports and airports went unfulfilled, and federal spending on water infrastructure fell to a 30-year low.

Scrapping its ballyhooed infrastructure plan, the Trump administration instead pushed legislation through Congress in December 2017 that was far more in tune with its real priorities—a \$1.9 trillion tax cut favoring corporations and wealthy Americans. "Corporations are literally going wild

over this," Trump chortled. At the same time, adopting the GOP's trickle-down approach, the administration promoted this legislation (the misnamed "Tax Cuts and Jobs Act") as a jobs-creating measure. Trump predicted a boom in business investment and claimed that factories are "not going to be abandoned any longer."

In fact, none of this followed, and, two years later, business investment was declining while mass layoffs continued. Recalling Trump's false promises about jobs creation, an embittered welder assailed the president's choice of tax cuts for the rich over infrastructure investments and lamented that he and other members of the building trades had been "snookered" by Trump's promises to rebuild the country.

In addition, despite all Trump's talk of creating manufacturing jobs, the nation actually had a net loss of 154,000 of them during his presidency. Nor was this surprising, for between 2016 and 2018—a period before the economic difficulties wrought by the pandemic—nearly 1,800 factories shut down in the United States.

The policies of the Trump administration played an important role in this decline of U.S. manufacturing capacity and employment. Its tariff wars with other nations added to the problem of U.S. trade deficits that had long undermined U.S. manufacturing. In addition, its tax policies, including provisions in its "Tax Cuts and Jobs Act," encouraged the outsourcing of jobs by U.S. corporations.

In numerous factory cities and towns, particularly in the Midwest Rust Belt, workers felt the effects of Trump's betrayal keenly. In 2016, Trump assailed the planned shutdown of the Rexnord steel bearings plant in Indianapolis and movement of its operations to Mexico. "No more!" he promised, and said he would raise taxes on companies like Rexnord. But the plant closed, 300 workers were left jobless, and the company received a \$55 million windfall from the administration's 2017 tax legislation. Dismayed by her termination after 18 years' employment at the plant, one jobless worker, who had voted for Trump, remarked: "He talked the talk everyone wanted to hear," but "I don't see him saving any jobs. . . . It's all a fake."

Similarly, General Motors, which received \$6.9 billion thanks to the administration's 2017 tax legislation, announced in November 2018 that it was closing its giant Lordstown, Ohio auto factory, thereby terminating the employment of 4,500 workers. The company then sold the plant to Lordstown Motors which, by October 2020, employed a total of 100 workers at half the pay. Trump, however, ignored such disasters, boasting during his 2020 re-election campaign that his policies had created "one manufacturing miracle after another in Ohio."

Overall, Trump's record as a "jobs president" was deeply flawed, but also sadly appropriate for an individual who had become famous for telling participants in a reality TV program: "You're fired!" ❖

Nikki Haley Writes "Finish Them" On A U.S. Bomb Destined For Israel

--By EDWARD CARVER

May 28, 2024—Humanitarians reacted with outrage on Tuesday after former presidential U.S. candidate Nikki Haley wrote and signed an arguably genocidal message on an Israeli artillery shell while visiting an Israel Defense Forces post.

"Finish them! America [loves] Israel always," Haley wrote on the shell Tuesday, signing her name. She was accompanied by Danny Danon, a member of the Knesset, Israel's parliament, who posted photos from their tour on social media. Haley, who was the ambassador to the United Nations under then-President Donald Trump, has been an ardent supporter of Israel's war in Gaza and has ties to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), a pro-Israel lobby group.

"Nothing to see here, just AIPAC's favorite politician, Nikki Haley, celebrating death and destruction in Gaza with an autographed missile," IfNotNow, a U.S. Jewish group that supports Palestinian rights, wrote on social media.

"Just disgusting," wrote Alon-Lee Green, director of the Jewish-Arab Movement for Peace, Equality & Social Justice in Israel. In the post, Green pleaded with Americans to take back their "filthy death-promoting politicians."

Alec Karakatsanis, an American civil rights lawyer, wrote that the Haley's message was "one of the most depraved things I have ever seen."

The timing of Haley's autograph of the weapon of war heightened the outrage. On Sunday night, Israel bombed the tents of displaced Palestinians in a "safe zone" of Rafah, killing at least 45 civilians, mostly women and children. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called the strike a "tragic

mistake," but the Israeli military then killed at least another 21 Palestinian civilians in a similar attack on a refugee camp in the southern Gaza Strip on Tuesday.

Haley "spent Memorial Day not commemorating fallen American service members, but visiting Israel as it conducts a brutal massacre in Gaza," The New Republic's Hafiz Rashid reported, calling her autographed message "sick."

One commentator suggested that Haley's act encapsulated the attitude of America's leaders. The most powerful members of both major parties, including President Joe Biden, a Democrat, have supported Israel's war in spite of condemnation by the United Nations General Assembly, the International Criminal Court, and the International Court of Justice, which ordered Israel to "immediately halt its military offensive" in Rafah.

"Biden provided the shells, Republicans autograph them," Yanis Varoufakis, former Greek minister of finance and pro-Palestine public intellectual, wrote on social media. "The U.S. political class is united in its complicity with this genocide." ❖

Noteworthy Numbers

400,000: The number of homes in New England that will be powered by *Vineyard Wind*, the nation's first utility-scale off-shore wind farm to come online.

1.4 million: The number of acres President Joe Biden conserved in 2023 by creating four new national monuments using the Antiquities Act. ❖

Range Damage From Cattle Far Exceeds Wild Horse Impacts: PEER

Yet, No Livestock Reductions Despite Severe Damage As Wild Horse Roundups Persist.

May 29, 2024 Washington, DC—America's public rangelands suffer far more damage from overgrazing by commercial livestock than from wild horses and burros, according to the latest U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) data analyzed by Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER).

The damage estimates are based on BLM's own Land Health Standards, which measure the minimum water quality, vegetation, and soil conditions needed to support wildlife.

PEER's analysis of range conditions through the end of 2023 reveals that 44 million acres of rangelands are failing BLM's minimum standards, with livestock being the primary cause, either in whole or in part. Consider...

- More than two-thirds of BLM acreage not meeting its own minimum Land Health Standards are due solely to livestock overgrazing, while less than 1% of those failing acres are due solely to wild horses;

- In the ten Western states under BLM's grazing program, only one (Nevada) has more than 1% of those failing acres where wild horses are even a factor; and

- Nationally, only 77 allotments (out of about 21,000 allotments) are failing due in whole or part to wild horses.

"When it comes to protecting America's rangelands, BLM

suffers from a severe bureaucratic cow blindness," stated Rocky Mountain PEER Director Chandra Rosenthal. She noted that an estimated 1.5 million cattle forage BLM lands compared to fewer than 75,000 wild horses. "BLM engages in controversial wild horse roundups, but reductions in cattle herds are rare, regardless of how bad conditions are on the ground."

The BLM figures also indicate some 6.9 million acres (approximately the size of Maryland) are also failing Land Health Standards, but the causes have not yet been identified. This is on top of another 36.5 million acres (an area bigger than Iowa) where BLM has yet to complete its land health determinations. Then, there are also another 1.2 million acres where the agency does not have complete data. By contrast, BLM has identified less than one million acres as failing solely due to wild horse impacts.

"Year by year, BLM is falling further behind in its inventory of unassessed rangelands," added Rosenthal. "Absent a firm grasp of actual land conditions, BLM range management decisions appear to be rooted in politics, and BLM's political calculus cows fare far better than horses." ❖

[Editor's note: Solidarity Notes publishes reports like this one as part of our effort to help readers understand how the U.S. Government is taking care of the Earth, one of the primary crises facing the Earth's people.]

Tesla Shareholders Approve \$45 Billion Pay Package For Musk

"It's an order of magnitude more egregious than the most egregious ever dared to ask for," an expert said of the pay package. The vote comes after Tesla fired thousands of workers.

--By EDWARD CARVER

June 14, 2024—Tesla shareholders on Thursday approved a pay package for CEO Elon Musk worth more than \$45 billion while rejecting a pro-union measure that sought to prevent the company from interfering with worker organizing.

The shareholder vote on Musk's pay package, the exact value of which fluctuates with the company's share price, was a response to a January court ruling that voided the package because the Tesla board that had issued it had too many personal and financial ties to Musk. The CEO's supporters expect the vote to strengthen his legal case for the money.

The unsuccessful pro-union proposal, which would have required the company to respect workers' right to assemble, had been brought by Scandinavian investors acting in solidarity with Tesla mechanics in Sweden who've been on strike since October. Tesla pays less than other carmakers and Musk has been openly anti-union, even saying that he disagrees with the idea of unions.

The shareholder votes came after the company fired 14,000 workers—more than 10% of its global staff—in April and then made further cuts shortly thereafter. More Perfect Union, a nonprofit newsroom, drew attention to the layoffs in reacting to news of the shareholder votes.

Calling the pay package "outrageous," the newsroom wrote on social media that "the vote allows Musk to further enrich himself, even as Tesla falters as a company and fires thousands of workers." ❖

(Read more at www.commondreams.org)

It's Never Too Late For A May Day Poem

On May Day 1980 the Green and Red themes were combined when a former Buick auto-maker from Detroit, one "Mr. Toad," sat at a picnic table and penned the following lines:

The eight hour day is not enough;
We are thinking of more and better stuff.
So here is our prayer and here is our plan,
We want what we want and we'll take what we can.
Down with wars both small and large,
Except for the ones where we're in charge:
Those are the wars of class against class,
Where we get a chance to kick some ass.
For air to breathe and water to drink,
And no more poison from the kitchen sink.
For land that's green and life that's saved
And less and less of the earth that's paved.
No more women who are less than free,
Or men who cannot learn to see
Their power steals their humanity
And makes us all less than we can be.
For teachers who learn and students who teach
And schools that are kept beyond the reach
Of provosts and deans and chancellors and such
And Xerox and Kodak and Shell, Royal Dutch.
An end to shops that are dark and dingy,
An end to Bosses whether good or stingy,
An end to work that produces junk,
An end to junk that produces work,
And an end to all in charge — the jerks.
For all who dance and sing, loud cheers,
To the prophets of doom we send some jeers,
To our friends and lovers we give free beers,
And to all who are here, a day without fears.
So, on this first of May we all should say
That we will either make it or break it.
Or, to put this thought another way,
Let's take it easy, but let's take it.

Want To Kick-Start The Union Movement? RESCIND THE TAFT-HARTLEY ACT

Enacted in 1947, over the veto of President Harry S. Truman. It was adopted into law by the GOP-controlled Congress and, when Truman vetoed it, enough Democrats joined the Republicans to override the veto.

The law prohibited closed shops, secondary boycotts, mass picketing, secondary picketing, wildcat strikes, jurisdictional strikes, and halted donations to federal political campaigns. The servitude act also amended the Wagner Act of 1935 to allow states to enact right-to-work (for less) laws.

Taft-Hartley gave much of the power in the workplace to capital and stabbed American workers in the back for more than half a century. Wonder why workers are on the short end of equality in the U.S. economy? Research Taft-Hartley and let's start a movement to rescind the vicious Cold War law. ❖

Buzzworthy News In NY From Sierra Club

The Atlantic Chapter of the Sierra Club recently celebrated the passage of the Birds and Bees Protection Act, signed into law by New York Governor Kathy Hochul.

Supporters are buzzing about the first law in the country that prohibits the use of seeds treated with neonicotinoid pesticides, which have devastated bee and other invertebrate populations.

The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that neonicotinoids threaten more than 200 federally protected species. "Using sound science as a backbone for the policies that protect New York's pollinators, water, and soil health will ensure our communities are safer for generations to come," said Caitlin Ferrante, the chapter's conservation program manager. Read more: sc.org/neonicotinoids.

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